

Faculty Development Centers and Libraries: United We Stand, Divided We Fall

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Introduction

Libraries and faculty development centers have distinct but similar missions on many campuses. With increasing emphasis on assessment and accountability in higher education, both must strive not only to serve patrons successfully, but document effectiveness of their services. One way that this can be achieved is through collaboration where the missions of the two organizations overlap.

Collaborations of this nature often are met with both challenges and rewards. This pilot study endeavors to identify ways that libraries and faculty development centers can collaborate effectively, barriers to such collaboration, and perceptions related to the roles of both organizations on campus.

Faculty Developer Roles

Faculty development centers can look very different from one campus to another and have a variety of names, from teaching center to instructional support department. Some serve primarily as faculty training centers, providing education and support on research and creative endeavors. Others take on more of an educational and instructional design role within the university. They may also focus on how to leverage technology for teaching. Often centers serve in multiple capacities to address specific needs of faculty at any given moment. Some offer instructional design services, yet have complex definitions of what exactly this means.¹

Surry and Robinson analyzed 449 ads for instructional technology positions and found eight categories: instructional technologists; instructional designer, distance learning coordinator; instructional technology manager/administer; technical support specialist, world wide web specialist, instructional technology librarian, and a miscellaneous category.² For the purposes of this study, we have classified instructional design librarians into the “library respondents” group, and other roles into one “faculty developer” category for the majority of the reporting areas. Classifications will be further explained in the methods section.

Librarian Roles

As librarians take on instructional responsibilities for information literacy content, and work with faculty in developing subject area guides, opportunities for collaboration with faculty developers increase. For example, on the Indiana University—Purdue University Fort Wayne (IPFW) campus, the faculty development center known as Center for the Enhancement of Learning and Teaching (CELT) and the Helmke Library have found common ground for developing resources and co-facilitating faculty workshops and seminars on technology, plagiarism, information literacy, and academic publishing leading to multiple and ongoing collaborations. These collaborations have grown out of the mutual goal of increasing the

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effectiveness of instruction on campus and the promotion of the scholarship of teaching and learning. Collaborative roles also have included support for course development, faculty referrals for assistance between the organizations, and the coordination of the IPFW Faculty Writing Circle, a Summer Writing Institute, and other support for the scholarship of research and writing.

Instructional design librarian and blended librarian jobs represent a hybrid of the librarian and faculty developer roles. In some instances this added complication to role definition has led to tension and stress between the two organizations. Bell and Shank define blended librarianship as “the traditional skill set of librarianship with the information technologist’s hardware/software skills, and the instructional or educational designer’s ability to apply technology appropriately in the teaching-learning process.”³ In their 2011 follow up article, they report that while librarians may have some of these skills, they do not need to be experts and partnerships with instructional designers will be critical in moving forward.⁴ Accordingly, Bell and Shank address an emerging context: “The librarian acts as a facilitator to a campus wide conversation about relevant topics and issues of the day....This means librarians have a new capacity to become ‘cooperation brokers’ with academic support staff (information technologists, instructional designers, student learning center staff, etc), faculty, and students...”⁵

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore how similar collaborative efforts have taken place nationwide and the barriers faced. A survey was created and distributed via professional listservs to get a broader perspective on the type and nature of collaborations taking place. This paper contains the preliminary results of this survey.

The study was inspired by feedback received from a collaboration of an IPFW faculty developer, librarian, and faculty member for a presentation on faculty writing circles given at Professional Organization

Network for Higher Education (*POD*) conference in 2013. Attendees at this session expressed surprise at this collaboration and indicated they had not considered seeking out the library for assistance with scholarly communication efforts beyond literature searching. This theme was echoed during other events and conversations as the conference progressed. A literature search revealed few reports on collaborations between faculty development centers and libraries. With awareness that successful collaborations may be happening but underreported, and that barriers may prevent such collaborations, an IPFW librarian and faculty developer designed a survey to explore the prevalence, context, and success of such joint efforts.

Relevant Literature

Barbara Dewey in her 2004 article outlined several strategies for embedded librarianship with an eye towards campus wide partnerships and participation. The areas of research support and instruction were highlighted, but while the importance of faculty and administrative relationships was emphasized there was no mention of faculty developers or instructional designers.⁶

One example of a successful collaboration took place at Morehead State University where a new faculty member, an instructional designer, and a librarian collaborated to outline strategies and tools that could aid in the creation of effective online learning communities. They emphasized the importance of community and interaction in both the design process and the student learning experience and listed several tools that can assist in this process.⁷

North Seattle Community College has also had success integrating the Library, Teaching and Learning Center, Media Services, and Distance Learning units under what they call the Instructional and Information Support Services division. This combines the different administrative units into one reporting structure under a single dean.⁸ This model would reduce or eliminate the often problematic funding and assessment requirements that can complicate multi-unit collaborations on a university campus.

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Collaborations, however, are rarely without some difficulties. At Arizona State university librarians and an instructional designer worked together to create short scenario-based modules for information literacy instruction within the learning management system. They admitted that while the collaboration was successful, there were several hurdles. They found that the librarians involved were not experienced in instructional design and underestimated the time and work it would take to construct the tutorials, and that the instructional design team member did not have a clear understanding of databases index searching and other information literacy proficiencies. Differences in expectations and expertise led to some frustrations.⁹

Methods

In the fall of 2014 the IPFW Information Services and Instruction Librarian for Health Sciences and the Instructional Consultant and Designer from CELT met to begin planning the survey. The first order of business was to decide the scope of the study and possible methods of distribution. Professional listservs for librarians, instructional designers, and faculty developers were selected. After IRB approval was granted, the survey invitations and survey link were sent out.

Survey questions were similar for each respondent group and mapped to each possible selection. Checklists to identify roles, instances of collaboration, and barriers were included. Open ended questions were used to gather specific details of collaborative efforts.

Results

The initial response set includes a total of 44 respondents, split fairly evenly between faculty developers and librarians. While options for Instructional Specialist, Instructional or Educational Technologist, and Teaching Assistant were available, no respondents indicated any of these as their primary role.

Responses for Librarian Role

When asked to define the primary role of a librarian, responses within the librarian group (including

TABLE 1
Respondents by Type

	Number	Percentage (%)
Librarian	21	48%
Instructional Design Librarian	4	9%
Faculty Developer	13	30%
Instructional Designer	3	7%
Professor or Instructor	1	2%
Other	2	5%

instructional design librarians) were broad, ranging from collection development to fostering lifelong learning. Noticeably, the majority of responses were clustered in the areas of resource location and utilization, and information literacy instruction for both the librarian respondent group and the faculty developer group. The major differences appeared in the number and breadth of roles given. Librarian responses included more emphasis on collection curation, copyright, and faculty assistance. Faculty developer responses related to resource use and information literacy, with very little deviation.

Examples of responses included: “Librarians facilitate the connection of people with the information they need. The line gets blurry with what technology folks do, sometimes, but librarians focus more on familiarity with collecting information content and helping people develop skills to access and assess content...” From a librarian respondent and “A liaison between the client (student and instructor) and the information—providing consolation, research, and instruction.” From an instructional designer, and “support faculty and student access to and skill in using library information resources; development of information literacy skills.” From a faculty developer.

Responses for Faculty Developer Role

When asked about the role of a faculty developer, including instructional designer, answers were similarly broad. Faculty developers saw their role primarily as support for effective teaching and learning processes, with some respondents indicating additional roles

in the promotion of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) and the faculty research agenda. Librarians, however, indicated a high level of confusion about the role of a faculty developer or instructional designer with several respondents indicating that they could not answer the question. The majority that could answer the question indicated that teaching and learning was the primary purpose, but several responded that teaching technology and transition to online course instruction were vital. Once again, there was more variety in the librarian than in the faculty developer answers, with librarians listing more roles, possibly related to the overall confusion expressed by many of the participants.

Responses for Collaborations

Ninety-three percent (93%) of faculty developers indicated they had personally worked with a librarian on a project related to faculty or course development, while only fifty-five percent (55%) of librarians reported having worked with a faculty developer. Most collaborations were centered on information literacy instruction either to faculty or students. Others ranged from SoTL to the development of online library guides and materials for learning management.

Seventy-three percent (73%) of librarians indicated their library and faculty development center had collaborated on projects, while ninety-three (93%) of faculty developers reported the same. Of both groups,

around seventy percent (70%) indicated they had recommended a collaboration at some time.

Librarians saw “Enrichment of research-based and multimedia content in courses in collaboration with instructors”, “Tutorials and guides to support student research skills,” and “Information literacy guidelines and workshops for faculty” as the most likely areas of collaboration. However, many respondents indicated potential for collaboration in all areas listed on the survey, with “Academic publishing or scholarly writing support” receiving the lowest count.

Faculty developers, however, saw this area as the third most likely for collaboration, with “Integration of mobile and emerging technologies for student learning,” receiving the lowest count. Both faculty developers and librarians had reported collaboration on information literacy guidelines and tutorials for student research skills as top areas for collaboration. Librarians most often marked collaboration on course content as an area for collaboration, but faculty developers rarely marked it as an area.

One reason for this difference may be that faculty developers view content as the professional domain of the faculty who teach in a particular subject area, not a domain of the librarian nor the faculty developer. Yet, librarians may have interpreted “course content” more broadly, viewing information literacy instruction as a component.

TABLE 2
In What Areas Do You Think Collaboration of Librarians and Faculty Developers Could Offer Major Benefits?

	Librarians	Faculty Developers
Academic Publishing or scholarly writing support	8	12
Information literacy guidelines & workshops for faculty	17	14
Academic Integrity and plagiarism prevention	14	10
Design of courses and assessments in collaboration with instructors	14	7
Enrichment of research-based & multimedia content in courses in collaboration with instructors	19	7
Strategies to support Scholarship of teaching and learning	9	8
Integration of mobile and emerging technologies for student learning	15	4
Tutorials and guides to support student research skills	18	13

In this initial pilot study, librarians on average rated the value of the collaboration between the library and the faculty development center slightly lower at 3.57 (and instructional design librarians at 3.0), while faculty developers rated the collaboration at 4.2 (and instructional designers at 4.33). One librarian wrote: “In many ways, these two professions are in direct competition, or are on course for convergence. I suppose it can be a matter of perspective as to what will happen: conflict or hybridization.” This sentiment, echoed by other librarians, did not appear in faculty developer answers. Librarians may be influenced by the increasing prevalence of instructional activities and blended and/or embedded librarianship in their roles as librarians.

Librarians saw the largest barrier to collaboration being split between perceptual limits on the role of librarians, differences in professional culture between the two groups, territorial behavior, and heavy workloads, yet no one category received more than four votes. Faculty developers listed perceptual lim-

its on librarianship as a major contributor, a general lack of awareness of how collaboration might support faculty, and workloads as barriers. Neither group saw competition for funding or campus recognition as an issue, but several developers indicated that their campuses did not have a formal library or lacked a formal development center. A few faculty developers indicated that a lack of faculty status or a difference in status between librarians and developers was an issue.

Limitations to the Study

One significant limitation to the study was the difficulty in locating participants from all fields of faculty development. Further responses will be gathered through additional professional listservs, currently under way, to compare results in a follow-up study. The inclusion of open ended questions for about half of the items may have reduced some responses. However, if this study is repeated, the data collected could be used to form multiple choice selections.

TABLE 3
What Do You Think Are the Major Barriers to Collaboration of Librarians and Faculty Developers?

	Librarians	Faculty Developers
Job descriptions that limit scope of work	1	5
Separate funding and reporting structures	3	3
Competition for funding or recognition	0	0
Absence of a formal faculty development center	0	4
Absence of a formal library on campus	0	2
Perceptual limits on roles of librarians as providers library materials and services only, not instruction consultants to faculty or as instructors	4	12
Perceptual limits on roles of faculty developers as providers of professional development not as providers of information literacy or library/research support	2	6
Lack of awareness of how collaboration might help support faculty	3	12
Differences in faculty rank or status between librarians and faculty developers	1	4
Differences in professional culture such as attitudes expectations, language/ jargon, and approaches to problem solving	4	4
Territorial behavior between professional groups	4	2
Workloads that do not allow enough time for collaboration	4	11
Other—Physical distance between departments	1	0

Conclusion

While the roles of faculty developers and librarians share some similarities, there are skills and viewpoints that make each profession distinct and collaborations between roles advantageous. As Shell, Crawford, and Harris discovered, the expertise differences in both professions can produce variable expectations.¹⁰ These differences may account for the discrepancies between librarian and faculty developer responses about collaborations and roles.

Participant responses were somewhat unexpected given the anecdotal evidence that led to the formation of the study, but encouraging nonetheless. With nearly all faculty developers indicating that they had worked with a librarian previously, this shows a high degree of library campus involvement. Further study should be done to determine why such collaborations were not rated as favorably by librarians as by faculty developers.

Notes

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3. Steven J. Bell and John Shank, "The blended librarian: A Blueprint for Redefining the Teaching and Learning Role of Academic Librarians," *College & Research Libraries News* 65, no. 7(2004): 372-375. Pg. 373
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